

# **Service Learning in Urban Alternative Schools: Investigating Affective Development in Preservice Teacher Education**

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## **1. Abstract:**

*Learning to be a teaching professional involves affective development. Preservice teachers need classroom experiences to make an informed decision to enter the profession. This Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) project is a part of my work as a member in the Carnegie Leadership Program, supported by the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) centering on Cognitive-Affective Learning (CAL). This SoTL project documents a service learning study conducted in an introductory education course and reports two kinds of data. The first kind of data comes from student interview questions and focuses on how this service-learning experience affected preservice teachers assigned as tutors at an urban alternative school. This data explored the extent to which this service learning experience developed and/or decreased motivation and interest in entering the teaching profession. The second kind of data spotlights the affective (dis)engagement of the preservice teachers through a reflective piece of the assigned case study for the course. Participants in this study read Parker Palmer's (1998) *The Courage to Teach* as one of the main course texts and were asked to reflect on the connections between and among their tutoring experiences, Palmer's text, and their growing notions of entering the teaching profession.*

## **Key Words:**

Cognitive affective learning, preservice teachers, service learning, Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), teacher education, urban education, alternative school.

## **2. Introduction: The Problem/s of Recruitment and Retention to K-12**

It is no real secret: the K-12 teaching profession is fraught with problems. Among these problems is both our inability to attract the best people to the profession and also to keep current teachers in the profession. This is especially true in urban school settings. Linda Darling-Hammond (1998) points out that within the first three to five years of entering the profession there is a 30% attrition rate. Anderson and Olson's (2007) work in urban teacher retention highlights "the need to reconceptualize teacher retention" (p. 1), and their findings reveal that "urban teachers will remain in urban education if they can adopt multiple education roles inside and outside the classroom and receive professional support during the whole of their careers, not just the beginnings of their teaching." (p. 1) However, this article will center on the "beginnings" of teaching, as it is one critical place to provide opportunities for future teachers to understand both the demands and rewards of teaching. More now than ever, we need to recruit quality K-12 teachers to the teaching profession, especially in urban school settings. My premise is that the way in which we organize and develop preservice

teacher education can create better opportunities for preservice teachers to make fully informed decisions to enter into a life of teaching.

### **3. Addressing the Problem**

This study provided an opportunity for participants to explore and make meaning of the relevant issues in the teaching profession, providing ways to make informed decisions to enter the profession with a clear vision of both the demands and the rewards awaiting them. Inherent in this notion of “quality” is that preservice teachers recognize the stresses of teaching, including dealing with disengaged students, disconnected teachers, and the political realities of schools (Palmer, 1998). My intention is not to accentuate some of the negative dimensions or discount the rewarding parts of being a teaching professional, but instead to prepare preservice teachers’ entry into the profession with a realistic perception of the work that awaits them—should they decide to continue on and work towards licensure. Nothing can replace practical experience in the K-12 urban classroom for making an informed decision to enter the profession of teaching. Teaching is important work, and the conscious decision to become a teacher should be fully investigated and at least partially informed by practical experiences.

The participants in this study were enrolled in my undergraduate course EDU 207 Teaching as a Profession. This interactive course introduces potential teachers to the real world of teaching through an in-depth, candid analysis of the teaching profession today; it explores the challenges and rewards of teaching; studies the history, philosophy, sociology, and politics of American education; and focuses on the current educational issues, trends, and reform movements. It is the first course in the sequence required for teacher licensure. The students in this course arrive with many notions of what it means to be a teacher. Most of them have had an array of wonderful teaching and learning experiences, are self-motivated, and come to class ready to learn. Many of these preservice teachers have never encountered students who lack motivation and positive role models, or do not enjoy learning. To bring about deep and enduring learning about the teaching profession, I use a service-learning component in my course. Students learn theory in the university classroom and then get real-world K-12 experiences at an urban alternative school to see if and how these theoretical pieces translate into the world of practice (Ball & Cohen, 1999).

### **4. How Does an Attention to Cognitive-Affective Learning (CAL) Make Sense in Addressing This Problem?**

Learning to be a teaching professional involves learning to think in divergent ways, to perform complex tasks with ease, and to develop a professional identity that integrates one’s values, attitudes, and skills: all of these attributes involve affective development. Service learning provides an avenue for students to uncover and experience the affective dimensions of the teaching profession; they experience the world of K-12 teaching directly in an authentic setting. The reflective component of service learning provides a way to document the learning that can occur; this kind of learning can be transformational (Strain, 2006).

In higher education, cognitive learning is usually privileged over affective learning. Affective learning involves more than just emotions. The human brain does not separate

emotions from cognitions and, without any attention given to students' interest, motivation, appreciation, and attitudes, real and enduring learning is incomplete (Chickering, 2006; Owen-Smith, 2004).

As a member of the Carnegie Leadership Program, I am studying and researching the connections between cognitive and affective learning using the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) as a conduit. The Carnegie Leadership Program is a program supported by the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL). I am the contact leader at University of Massachusetts Dartmouth for this three-year (2006-2009) Carnegie Leadership Program group focusing on Cognitive Affective Learning (CAL) in student learning.

## **5. The SoTL Context**

I investigated the data generated through the service learning component of my EDU 207 course. The artifacts for this particular study include the data collected from preservice teacher questionnaires (at two points in the semester) and from the reflective component of end-of-semester case studies on urban alternative school students. The questions and criteria for each of these teaching artifacts are provided in the appendices of this article. Making this work public, in the largest sense, attempts to add to the intellectual work of teaching. It adds to the literature on preservice teacher education and invites other teacher scholars to build upon it. Lee Shulman, former President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, points out that unlike fields such as architecture and law, where new work builds on a body of existing work, teaching is "devoid of a history of practice" (Ornstein, Behar-Horenstein & Pajak, p. 117, 2003).

## **6. Methods in this SoTL Service Learning Project**

In my SoTL work, I investigated how a service learning component might affect and influence students' decisions to become teaching professionals. Students in EDU 207 were required to complete 15 hours of tutoring in order to fulfill course and state requirements for pre-practicum hours. These hours were simultaneously considered service-learning; university students worked to meet the needs of the K-12 community and then re-integrated these experiences back into the EDU 207 course, making connections and/or disconnections to the research base and theoretical framework of the teaching profession. Their service-learning experience was documented through the use student interview questions and reflective diaries; students were required to explore their interests, motivations, and values and thus the affective domain of learning was explored. Between 2006 and 2008, EDU 207 participants in this study worked with seventh and eighth graders at an alternative secondary school in an urban setting. The students at this alternative school had been expelled from mainstream schools for various reasons, including behavior and discipline problems.

Data were collected to capture my preservice teachers' experiences in terms of affective development in student learning using two methods. First, through the implementation of a questionnaire comprising mainly affective-based questions about their pre-practicum experiences, which involved tutoring and teacher observations at this urban school site. The questions were designed to allow data regarding students'

motivation and interest in becoming a teacher. The questionnaire (see Appendix A) was administered to preservice teachers in EDU 207 twice in the spring semester of 2007. These preservice teachers were a part of the second semester (of four semesters) of working with seventh and eighth graders at the New Bedford Alternative School.

The second method of data collection method was to use the reflective piece of the assigned case study, which is an integral part of the EDU 207 coursework for each participant in the course. The portion of the case study involved a reflective piece on Parker Palmer's (1998) *The Courage to Teach* in relation to their service learning experiences at the urban alternative school. Preservice teachers were asked to identify and write about an important theme from Palmer's text and to articulate that theme in connection with the student whom they tutored at the urban alternative school. These data represent another way to document the learning in the "service learning." Palmer's text was one of three required texts used in EDU 207. It is important to note that all teachers at this alternative high school were also reading Palmer's text, which raised awareness in interest and motivation for learning.

## **7. Data Analysis**

The first data set growing out of the student interview questions (from Appendix A) were administered to students twice in each of the two semesters; data was collected in the fourth week and then again in the twelfth week of each semester. By the fourth week of the semester, each participant had begun the tutoring of his or her student at the alternative school. By the twelfth week, each participant had had the opportunity to meet with the student whom he or she was tutoring several times. Each participant spent a total of fifteen hours with his or her student, and, by the twelfth week, more than ten hours had been spent tutoring. Numbers were randomly assigned to each participant, which ensured anonymity for the participants and allowed a view on each student's "progression" from the first data collection to the second. The researcher believed in the importance of student voices; therefore, the student interview questions were used as one kind of data collection to gather insight into the factors that both inhibit and generate interest and motivation to enter the teaching profession.

An inductive process was utilized for the first set of data, where emerging themes were generated directly from student voices. The data was systematically gathered through the research process and then analyzed. This analysis refers to sense-making of the collected data and an articulation of the themes emerging from the data. In writing about qualitative data analysis, Miles and Huberman (1994) state that the focus is on data in the form of words. In this case words emanate from the interviews conducted, and the processing of these words and ideas represent the form of analysis used.

For the second data set, participants were asked to choose a theme of interest from chapters one and two of Parker Palmer's (1998) *The Courage to Teach*. Each participant was asked to write about the meaning of that theme in the context of their tutoring experiences at the alternative school. This part of the study had a more deductive approach because participants had to choose an existing theme from Palmer's work and make meaning of that theme in their teaching lives. As its purpose, this part of the study aimed at deepening the understanding of identified themes of importance to preservice teachers. It was an attempt to get an "inside" view on

participants' ideas of the relevance of Palmer's themes to their current and future teaching lives. This model of investigation provided a way to encourage a more in-depth understanding involved in entering the teaching profession.

## 8. Findings/Results

In the first section of the findings, I have organized the emerging themes from each student interview question. These interview questions were anonymous and given to two different groups of students of EDU 207—one group was from the Fall of 2006 and the other from the Spring of 2007. Under each of the questions below, I unpacked these emerging themes with specific examples which are representative of students' responses. In the second section, I have reported the data from the reflective component of the assigned case study. Similarly to section one, emerging themes are listed with accompanying quotes culled from students' case studies.

### Part One: Responses to Preservice Teacher Interview Questions

Question 1. Through the experiences in your tutoring and teacher observations, what is your perception of the teaching profession as a whole? Have these perceptions changed? If so, how? If not, how have your experiences confirmed your existing perception(s)?

#### *Challenging Profession*

One respondent explained that it could be a "draining profession". Others talked about how it is "hard work". Another preservice teacher characterized what some of these challenges included, "Teachers need lots of patience and the ability to go with the changes that occur in the classroom. My perception has changed because I knew it was going to be hard, but I didn't think that the kids would be resistant to help." Through service learning, preservice teachers were able to view the demands of the profession through firsthand experience.

#### *Undervalued Profession*

Preservice teachers' perceptions of teachers at the urban alternative school were that they were generally "overworked, undervalued, and underpaid". Nevertheless, after this service learning experience, many preservice teachers seemed even more determined about their decisions to become teachers. One preservice teacher wrote, "I still strongly believe that I want to be a teacher. It can be frustrating at times with trying to keep the kids' attention, however, I still want to take on that task." While cognizant of the way in which both the profession and teachers may be undervalued, another student expressed similar enthusiasm and fortitude, "I still cannot wait to become a teacher. I still think that it is a very rewarding job. My time spent at West Side hasn't been the ideal situation, but I still see so much potential in these students even if they may not seem interested in learning." Even this preservice teacher's repetition of the word "still" seems to indicate that he or she has an understanding of the difficulties inherent in the profession but is still determined to make the commitment to becoming a teacher.

Question 2. What positive experiences in your pre-practicum have contributed to your interest in becoming a teacher?

### *Making a Difference*

Respondents were engaged by the notion of how powerful a teacher's influence can be on a student. "One of the students is showing a noticeable change in interest and ability. This makes me want to teach because I want to be the person that starts the change," a respondent said of the experience.

Another respondent reflected on how the student being tutored was "really in need of one on one, and providing that for her makes me feel that I can make a difference." It appears here that self-efficacy was heightened for both the respondent and urban alternative student.

Another participant shared that what contributed to his or her interest in becoming a teacher was "helping students—I love knowing that they are getting something out of me going there." Participants were very interested in developing their capacities to assist students, and this generated interest in the profession.

### *Lack of Respect*

Question 3. What experiences in your pre-practicum have detracted from or lessened your interest in becoming a teacher?

One respondent's interest in becoming a teacher was lessened by the lack of respect he or she observed. S/He wrote: "Seeing the disrespect toward some of the teachers is discouraging, but when wanting to become a teacher, you should already expect to have to deal with some respect issues."

### *Apathy, Disruption, and Lack of Motivation*

Some participants' interest in the profession was decreased by some behaviors and attitudes of the alternative school students. One respondent shared: "What lessens my interest in becoming a teacher is the way some of the students act inside the classroom. They sometimes get very lazy and become very disruptive, which seems to make the class impossible to teach. The kids are just unmotivated and it is hard to see how I could help motivate them to learn."

Question 4. What parts of being a teacher have become more valuable to you?

### *Making a Difference*

The idea of making a difference, which emerged as a theme in responses to question two, was also echoed in the responses to this question. Through this service learning experience, one respondent valued the profession more because of "the idea that you really can make a difference. The girl I tutor looks forward to my visits because I pay attention to her. I hope to give as much attention to all of my students someday."

Another respondent found that "truly helping students and making a lasting impression" added value to the idea of becoming a teacher. "The piece of teaching where you help make a difference in someone's life," represented what made the profession valuable. And one other respondent commented: "When I am leaving the

school, I feel better about myself because I know I helped a child.” Though making a difference in a student’s life does not come with commensurate financial rewards, respondents valued the profession because they could positively impact students’ lives.

### *Uncovering Potential in Students/ Lighting Fires*

Another theme that grew out of the participants’ responses was the idea of uncovering potential in students; this ability added value to visions of the teaching profession. One respondent appreciated being able to “help students that have trouble reaching their goals.” Another respondent characterized that part of the teaching role was “knowing that children have a desire to learn, but I need to help them get motivated and prove to them that they can be successful.” This enhanced her view of the profession and made her value it more. One other respondent learned that identifying and unlocking potential in students was valuable. This respondent explained how this experience made the profession more valuable, “Trying to get kids that appear very uninterested in learning to learn. You can tell by looking at these kids that they still have a lot of potential—they just don’t know what to do with it.”

### *Patience and Respect*

Another emerging theme that accounted for respondents valuing the profession more was observing the qualities of patience and respect exhibited by practicing teachers at the alternative school. One respondent described some of the observed teachers as “Having eternal patience and not showing personal frustration.” Another piece of the interview data reflected on teachers having “Patience to teach to different types of learners.” Responding to different students’ needs as learners was seen as a respectful act of pedagogy, and it enhanced respondents’ valuing of the profession.

### *Student/Teacher Rapport*

The positive interactions between teachers and students also accounted for why respondents valued the profession more. One participant noted that “Maintaining respect between the students and myself is KEY.” Another respondent added: “I think that one-on-one interaction is very valuable to me. That way students and teachers can have meaningful relationships where the students’ individual needs can be met,” which characterized the importance of open communication between teachers and students.

Question 5. What parts of being a teacher have become less valuable to you?

### *The Environment/Working Conditions*

It is no secret that schools are political places, and data from students highlighted how observing some of the politics of this urban alternative school made respondents value the profession less. One respondent was discouraged by “the politics of the institution.”

### *Teacher Disengagement with the Profession*

Although many of the teachers at this urban alternative school were very engaged in their work with students, some respondents valued the profession less because of their interactions “with detached/ burned out teachers.” Other respondents lost some value in the teaching profession because of their observations of practicing teachers’ attitudes

and actions. Another respondent “noticed that some teachers are negative and gossip a lot. I do not want to pre-judge my students based on what other teachers say because students may react to me differently.” Luckily, we learn from both examples of what we want to become and also what we do not want to become. And nothing replaces practical experiences for forming their own teaching identity.

Question 6. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your pre-practicum experiences that have affected your attitudes toward teaching? If so, how?

### ***Motivation***

Working with students at this alternative school reinforced respondents’ notions of teachers as agents of change. One respondent shared that “There’s probably a way to reach disinterested kids, which is a goal of mine.”

For some respondents, this experience was transformative and solidified the decision to enter the profession. Another respondent explained that “In the small amount of time I’ve had, it has re-sparked my interest in being a teacher.”

### ***Respect***

Respondents observed that without granting respect to one’s students, the best kind of learning could not be fostered. One articulated that “Teaching comes from understanding and respecting students, and having a rapport with them. Only from a place of respect can anyone hope to truly educate.”

## **Part Two: Reflective Piece of the Case Study**

Respondents chose three main themes for which to respond: Fear, Identity and Integrity, and Community. The reflective component of these case studies explored these themes in relation to the participants’ tutoring experiences. The requirements and criteria for this assignment can be found in Appendix B. After each theme below, there are accompanying examples of quotes from respondents’ work. Each student was asked to make connections between their identified theme from Palmer’s text and his or her tutoring experiences at the urban alternative school.

### ***Fear***

One respondent wrote about the theme of fear and talked about how “fear can be either a positive or a negative emotion.” S/He referenced the following quote from Palmer’s (1998) work, “Some fears can help us survive, even learn and grow—if we know how to decode them.” (p. 39) Looking through the “lens” of fear in his/her own life and shared fears of “college, a certain teacher, what my friends thought of me, and confrontation.” Again associations were made to lines from Palmer’s text: “I should have remembered from my own experience that students, too, are afraid: afraid of failing, of not understanding, of being drawn into issues they would rather avoid, of having their ignorance exposed or their prejudices challenged, of looking foolish in front of their peers.” (p. 37) By integrating ideas from Palmer’s writing, this respondent made meaning of the relationships between her experiences and those of the alternative school students. S/He wrote:

Every student goes through the same type of fears, but chooses to deal with them differently, which is the case for the kids we are tutoring... They put up a “tough front” but deep down I am sure that they fear many things, whether what they might have to go home to, a fight, or how they may appear to their peers. This is something all kids go through as they are trying to create their own identity. They need positive influences in their lives who cannot give up on them because they need a strong support system to get through adolescence, which can be extremely scary and difficult.

The written reflections on this theme evidence the learning that occurred. S/He understands the importance of a teacher being a positive influence in a student’s life; this role as a positive force can address students’ needs, perhaps lessen some of the fears inherent in the schooling life of a student, and deepen learning possibilities.

Another respondent also chose to write about fear and characterized it as “being the root of the problematic disconnection between teacher and student.” This respondent went on to explain that Palmer, proclaims that fear is what distances us from others—our peers, students, subjects, and even ourselves.” The background of this respondent was self-described as being from “a family, city, and background where it was unlikely for me to attend college, but “still managed to get to and succeed through college.” S/He explained about having “great passion to influence other children akin to myself in giving them the same hope and aspirations to do what the statistics say they are not fit to accomplish,” but later pointed out that, even though similarities could be seen between the alternative school students and his/ her situation, this respondent did not want to enter that teaching space with a largely false and stereotyped sense of understanding of all the fears future students might face. S/He further clarified how Palmer’s work helped her understand that teachers’ stereotyping of students’ fears might be a mask for the teachers’ fear and end up making the fear in students worse. To illustrate this point further, Palmer’s words were quoted about how a condescending view of students may “make our lives look noble in comparison to the barbaric young, and place the sources of our students’ problems far upstream from the place where our lives converge with theirs.” (p. 41) This respondent explained that teachers “may not know what causes someone to be a certain way. And rather than label or prejudge them... teachers need to teach with openness to fearful hearts.” With the student at the alternative school, this respondent made meaning of her new awareness of the role of teachers. S/He put in plain words:

With my student, I felt that I could connect with him because of where he came from and I could show him he had opportunities to succeed. I realize now that this is probably what every other older person was preaching to him. I now see that it is important to hear his truths regarding his fears, somehow, to really ‘understand’ him... A good teacher must empathetically enter into their students’ worlds so that they will perceive us as trustworthy people with the promise of being able to hear their truths, rather than protecting your own truths and fears.

This meaning-making evidences the power of service learning in teacher education. Experiences and texts were viewed as raw materials that could grow learning opportunities. Concluding with an overarching notion of fear in the space of teaching and learning; this respondent chose Palmer’s account that “we cannot see the fear in

our students until we see the fear in ourselves.” (p. 41) S/He ended by saying that good teaching takes “great courage.”

### *Identity and Integrity*

One respondent explained that the theme of identity and integrity was most important. S/He explained her interest in Palmer’s discussion of this theme because a “good’ teacher is traditionally described as a person who knows his or her material well, not a person who knows himself or herself well.” What follows below are reflections on schooling experiences in relation to Palmer’s ideas:

The theme of identity and of knowing one’s self is of particular importance to me because the best teachers I have ever had were ones who were wise in all areas of their lives, not just in their particular subject matters. As a student, the classes that have been my favorite and taught me the most were classes in which I was allowed to share a little bit of myself and the teacher was willing to do the same. I would hope that as a teacher, my students would be aware of my identity as well as their own, and I would also hope that our identities would play an important part in the learning process; our identities shape the way in which we learn best as well as the way in which we change as a result of what we’ve learned... Sometimes it is not only the content of learning that is important, but the way you feel about learning in the first place; thus if the teacher who is attempting to educate you does not know how they feel about their material or even their life, their lack of identity and self will directly reflect on the learners.

This respondent’s writing confirms and evidences her new understandings about the cognitive and affective dimensions of the teaching profession. S/He ended by quoting Palmer’s (1998) own words on identity and integrity: “The self is not infinitely elastic—it has potentials and limits. If the work we do lacks integrity for us, then we, the work, and the people we do it with will suffer” (p. 16). Good teaching requires more than just knowing the subject matter; good teaching weaves the self, the subject, and one’s students together into a united quilt of learning.

Another respondent also joined his/her own K-12 experiences in making meaning of identity and integrity in teaching. S/He echoes the previous respondent’s reflections by highlighting that teaching is much more than just knowing the subject and the techniques. S/He quoted Palmer’s famous line”, good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher” (p. 10) and articulated how important it is to have good communication with students:

It is important to relate your past experiences and allow students to share their experiences and feelings as it adds interest. Integrity to me means that teachers should be supportive and make themselves ‘relatable’ to the students, but at the same time they must stick to curriculum and maintain discipline in the classroom. There is no technique or formula to being a good teacher. Most teachers who stick to a technique day in and day out cannot generate any interest in their subject and cannot engage their students as it tends to be boring. As a teacher, I believe the techniques used must suit the needs of the students and make a balance between making a subject interesting and getting the material done.

This respondent continued the reflective piece by making meaning of the work with the alternative school students. S/He explained that in the tutoring experiences, you must show that you can relate...find compatibility through some means even if it is simple like showing your vulnerabilities or even discussing videogames briefly." This illustrates Palmer's notion that teaching is made up of more than just technique; teachers must find ways to connect their identity with those of the students they teach.

### *Community*

One respondent wrote about the theme of community in Palmer's work and chose this quote: "Good teachers possess a capacity for connectedness. They are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects, and their students so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves" (p. 11) S/He made meaning of this connectedness or community in her own work as a tutor:

I think it is extremely important to be a connected teacher. As a teacher one needs to understand the students you are teaching, the community they come from, and their individual strengths and weaknesses. To understand these things a teacher needs to be connected. According to Palmer to be connected means that you open your heart to your students. I agree with him. You cannot connect to your students if you yourself are not open. To open yourself to your students is to trust them; students will see this trust and respond in kind...These (alternative school) students need to be in a safe and trusting environment to be able to learn.

This respondent highlights the importance of trust in building community with students. These pieces of learning are large and enduring and will serve this preservice teacher well in her future interactions with students.

Another respondent referred to the theme of community as "connectivity"; s/he reflected on the same quote about teaching and technique as the previous respondent. S/He reflected on this quote by writing "as a teacher you can't just go into class every day, go through the motions and expect to intrigue adolescent minds." This was further explained by highlighting the essential connections between teacher and students come from "having a good sense of self-awareness." S/He asked this question: "if you don't know yourself, how can you make yourself available to others in the classroom?" For this respondent, like Palmer, knowing one's self represents the linchpin for the creation of community or "connectivity," as it was aptly put. S/He also located this theme in the work with the student at the alternative school:

From the day we met at the lunch we seemed to have a lot in common. Even though we have a decent gap in age, I feel we are very similar in the ways we dress, the music we enjoy and our hobbies and interests. Whether this would make me an immature adult, or him a mature adolescent I am not sure. The thing that matters to me is that when I go to the school to work with him he gets his work done promptly, and we work very well together, always making time for casual conversation which never seems forced. I feel like he enjoys when I am there and that he doesn't mind doing his school work when we work together.

This respondent explained that making connections with students was the way s/he wanted to teach in the future and that he wanted to keep the classroom “youthful.” From practical experiences as a tutor for an alternative school student, the importance of creating community in promoting learning was uncovered.

## **9. Discussion/Reflections on the Findings**

The voices of the participants in this study may provide information about how to reorganize teacher education experiences so that we can help students make fully informed decisions to enter the profession—so that they enter with eyes wide open. Service learning provides a practical application for learning, opportunities for reflecting on one’s activities, and for providing a bridge between theory and practice. Both kinds of data, the student interviews and the reflective component of the case studies, explored the cognitive and affective dimensions of what it means to be a quality teaching professional.

In terms of the demands of the teaching profession, the themes emerging from the student interview data include that the profession is challenging, there is a lack of respect for teachers, and the notion that teachers are undervalued. These themes reflect some of what we already know about the demands of the teaching profession. Though the specific term “burnout” did not emerge in the findings of this study, teachers who are unable to provide for their students both physically and emotionally leads to emotional exhaustion and eventually to teacher burnout. (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Grayson and Alvarez (2007) assert that emotional exhaustion in teachers is a “tired feeling that develops over time as one’s emotional resources are drained.” (p. 1350) This verifies that there is a degree of external validity to the findings in connection with the literature on teacher education. It is important that future teachers know that in choosing to teach, they may likely encounter challenges, be undervalued, and lack respect as teachers. Because there are a myriad of affective dimensions in the teaching profession, which center on the idea of teaching to the whole person, future teachers will need to draw on their emotional resources.

Themes which demonstrate the rewards of teaching emerged from the participants’ interview data and include making a difference in students’ lives, uncovering potential in students, patience and respect with students, and good student teacher rapport. All of these themes reflect the affective dimensions of the teaching profession because they all involve aspects of caring about a student’s progression as a learner and development as a person. Personal satisfaction in teaching is particularly important, in part, because most teachers enter the profession so that they can make differences in their students’ lives. It is unlikely that they enter the profession for the financial rewards. (Schwab, 2001)

Students wrote about the three themes of Fear, Identity and Integrity, and Community in the reflective component of their case studies. Respondents made meaning of the affective dimensions of these themes in the context of their work with urban alternative school students. Respondents demonstrated deepened learning of the fears inherent in the teaching and learning space. Not all fears are negative, and teachers need to be aware of what is going on with their students, have empathy for them, and conduct themselves as positive role models. The importance of identity and

integrity was navigated and explored; respondents in this study reinforced the value of prior experiences for both teacher and student. And part of this valuing of prior experiences grows through mutual respect between and among teachers and learners. The theme of community, also articulated through the respondents' case studies, illustrated how the creation of a trusting environment can be promote and deepen learning. All of these themes reflect the affective dimensions important in the profession of teaching.

## 10. Where to Go From Here

Riane Eisler (2006) talks of constructing partnership models in education, ones which prepare “a new generation with understanding and experience in a partnership way of being, interacting, and thinking” (p. 134). She contrasts this more progressive partnership model to what she terms the “dominator model.” While the partnership model represents an “integrated pedagogy that honors students as whole and diverse individuals” (p. 135), the dominator model characterizes the teacher as the sole source of information and knowledge and where relations are based on teacher control. I believe we need to work towards the partnership model to improve teacher education.

Eisler recognizes that “although state requirements allow little space for experimentation, teacher training programs must be approached more creatively—and more collaboratively—than has been the traditional practice” (p. 136). The service learning project documented in this article represents one way to collaborate in a creative way with local urban alternative school students and connects to Eisler's partnership model for education. Though the integration of service learning is not new, there are new ways of accessing, documenting, and promoting meaning-making through student reflection and writing. Through practical experience and reflection on that experience, respondents in this study were afforded an opportunity to have an “insider's view” on the teaching profession. And with this view, I believe they have become better equipped to make informed decisions about entering the profession of teaching.

I am, in Riane Eisler's terms, trying to work towards a “partnership model” in creating new, creative, and collaborative modes for preservice teacher training. Going forward, it makes sense to try and do something that dynamically combines projects in which I am already involved or am very interested in pursuing. That way I can try to combine the best ideas into a learning “whole”. I am thinking of ways to enlarge this service learning component by finding new ways of combining reading, writing, and technology. But more than that, I want to bring a variety of things and different groups of people together. These include Changing Lives Through Literature, technology as a learning tool, new learning modes that have roots in the culture and traditions of India, and contemplative writing, which works as an assessment tool for feedback on the learning outcomes of this dynamic mix. I would like to do this by creating community or reviving a plan to “build a new neighborhood” (Hall and Waxler, p. 10, 2007) through a community focused writing plan involving many different stakeholders. The main idea of this new teaching plan is to involve actively the groups of students I teach as people who are a part of this community, this new neighborhood. The kinds of enduring learning that I would want to promote for all involved would include deep reading, thoughtful writing,

self-efficacy, and concern for others in the world. That is asking a lot, but you have to “keep the vision”, as my collaborative CLTL partner and colleague Professor Robert Waxler so often reminds me. I think I know what he means. Waxler’s CLTL program does promote a vision. Part of that vision has to do with getting people to read deeply and respond to literature. That is what literature is there for, in part, to give us something to talk to each other about (or in some cases IM or text to each other). For this coming semester, I have many ideas about how I might invite participation for students to dialogue (both face-to-face and in cyber-locations) with each other about different kinds of learning. Certainly, I have not clearly articulated how exactly I will do what I propose. But because I am working with others, I cannot plan this completely by myself. However, I know that whatever ramifications we come up with will attempt to be both collaborative and creative. I will be working in community with others to manifest a vision of a partnership model of learning (Eisler, 2006) to improve preservice teacher education. And working and being in community with others is also generative for my teaching and learning because “I believe that in the best learning environments, there is a space characterized by mutual inquiry, a place where teachers are learners and learners are teachers.” (Hall, p. 1, 2005)

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## **Appendix A**

### **Student Interview Questions**

1. Through the experiences in your tutoring and teacher observations, what is your perception of the teaching profession as a whole? Have these perceptions changed? If so, how? If not, how have your experiences confirmed your existing perception(s)?
2. What positive experiences in your pre-practicum have contributed to your interest in becoming a teacher?
3. What experiences in your pre-practicum have detracted from or lessened your interest in becoming a teacher?
4. What parts of being a teacher have become more valuable to you?
5. What parts of being a teacher have become less valuable to you?
6. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your pre-practicum experiences that have affected your attitudes toward teaching? If so, how?

## **Appendix B**

### **EDU 207 Teaching As A Profession: Reflective Component of the Case Study**

(worth 10 pts total of course grade)

Reflections on a theme in Parker Palmer's (1998) *The Courage to Teach* in two parts.

Directions: Choose a theme of interest to you from Palmer's text in either Chapter 1 or 2 and describe how this theme is important to you in your (current and future) teaching life.

Make sure you:

**Part 1. Clearly articulate a theme from Palmer's text (from either Chapter 1 or 2).**

\*Use at least two quotes that illustrate this theme. These quotes come directly from the text (remember to cite page numbers).

\*Explain why this theme is important to you in your current and future teaching life.

(5 pts. possible)

**Part 2. Making-meaning of your service learning experience.**

Directions: Using the same theme from Palmer's work that you chose above, describe how this theme is important in your work with your student.

\* Give examples of how this theme informs your tutoring experiences at the urban alternative school.

(5 pts. possible)